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No More Yurchenkos

Recent events demand that more attention be paid to U.S. intelligence capabilities. In the Yurchenko defection, the Walker spy case, and the Ed Howard defection, the intelligence community, despite suspicions, failed to check further until damage to our national security had been done.

After all these cases and many more, U.S. intelligence officials and congressional oversight committees now reluctantly propose some of the very counterintelligence measures they had long opposed—measures such as placing limits on the number of Soviet and East European officials permitted in this country and improving the security of government communications.

These basic security tools will neither create nor implement a counterintelligence policy. There are far too many in the intelligence community who either do not understand counterintelligence or who, understanding its concepts, have climbed to the top of their career ladders by opposing it.

Just what is counterintelligence? Whatever else it is, domestic or foreign, it is not putting people in jail, mounting gumshoe operations or violating the rights of Americans. It is an intellectual exercise aided by tools of varying characteristics. It requires two professional characteristics: humility and skepticism—the humility to believe you could be deceived and the skepticism to believe you are being deceived. Absent these, nothing works.

Properly speaking, counterintelligence is, first, the effort to learn what hostile intelligence services know or are trying to learn about us, and especially about our own intelligence operations. Second, it is an effort to learn what those hostile services might want to do with that knowledge. Third, it is an effort to manage the exposure of our own security and intelligence operations so that the hostile intelligence service sees of us only what we want it to see. (Indeed, a competent counterintelligence capability becomes the means by which the enemy can be led astray).

Competent counterintelligence weaves together a complex matrix of information. Above all it must not confine itself to an examination of individual events in isolation. It looks for the missing pieces as well as analyzing those pieces already in place. Serious professionals must assume that, on any given topic, a hostile intelligence service will try to collect information; protect itself and deceive the other side by a variety of technical and human assets. Each individual "case" is less likely to show the hand of the hostile intelligence service than a whole situation might do. Even with the best piecing together of the parts, the truth in a completed matrix may not be readily visible.

Therefore, competent counterintelligence

analysis will devise different hypotheses to explain or test the involvement of a hostile intelligence service in any given situation. Competent counterintelligence analysis will then test each hypothesis by the most secure means. The truth of each fact must be checked. Assuming that good ruses are built upon facts, counterintelligence analysis will cross-check the validity of each fact. This is a time-consuming process requiring self-discipline and conservation of secure sources.

Unfortunately, the American intelligence community is severely limited in its counterintelligence capability. Efforts are limited to surveillance of well-known suspects, jailing criminals or collecting information from hostile collectors who defect to our side—or pretend to do so. Most of our technical collectors remain innocent of the fact that the other side can manage its exposure to our satellites. Our collectors continue to believe that "a picture is a picture" and "a signal is a signal" or even worse, that "a defector is a defector." Many intelligence people refuse to believe that the KGB gives out "feed materials." Frequently, the intelligence community is so eager for intelligence successes that it believes any Soviet secrets it receives are genuine.

Sadly, today's situation is not new. Ten years ago, a Soviet defector—an agent in place with the code name "Fedora"—told us that a whole class of Soviet missiles was too inaccurate to hit our silos. That information fit precisely with telemetry data we had gathered. It also fit precisely what we wanted to believe. Our intelligence management ignored or gave no credence to evidence that the Soviet telemetry was biased and that Fedora was working for the Soviets. The truth was that the missiles turned out to be silo-killers, and Fedora, although exposed, returned as happily to the Soviet Union as Yurchenko just did.

Let us examine the Yurchenko affair as a case in point. Yurchenko was purportedly the No. 2 man in charge of KGB operations against North America. Yet the agency was not fazed by his failure to reveal the Soviets' basic unofficial cover network or the dimensions of their illegal network, as one might have expected. The agency seized the names he threw it of a few peripheral ex-CIA employees upon whom suspicion had already fallen. Yurchenko told it exactly what it wanted to hear—that the CIA was basically unpenetrated and their operations were safe.

High-ranking officials failed to perform the painstaking task of looking at Yurchenko's complex matrix. They merely checked some of his facts against their own and, when these turned out to be real, they boasted of success. They utterly failed to ask the obvious counterintelligence question: What could the No. 2

KGB man in North America be expected to know? Or, if he did not know or did not reveal what he should know, why didn't he?

Just 48 hours before Yurchenko's defection, a very high-ranking intelligence official told me he would stake his career on Yurchenko's *bona fides*. Now he and his peers seek to cover themselves by saying that *some* of what Yurchenko said is true. The step was simply never taken to ask what *should* he know that he hasn't told us? The American people have the right to expect better professionalism than this. And for that very reason, I continue to insist on the need for a competent counterintelligence policy implemented by an intelligence community that is devoted to its principles. All the information in the world is of little value to us if we cannot discern both its reliability and its relevance. Policy will help, but professionalism will achieve.

Despite its faults, the American intelligence community is full of able, dedicated professionals. They deserve better than to have this series of crippling events cloud their reputation. A first-class counterintelligence policy enriched by the dedication of the community's leadership would go a long way toward avoiding recurrent circumstances.

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